

CHAPTER 8 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

More and more, effective planning efforts for community facilities, environmental protection, transportation, and land use are increasingly beyond the abilities of single jurisdictions. This chapter identifies areas where intergovernmental coordination is ongoing, as well as, issues that may require intergovernmental cooperation in the future. The examples of possibilities for intergovernmental coordination are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Sandy Springs should continue to look for ways to increase the levels of cooperation in all functional areas.

This chapter provides an inventory of existing intergovernmental coordination mechanisms and processes with other local governments and governmental entities that can have a bearing on the success of implementing the local government's comprehensive plan. This chapter also assesses the adequacy and suitability of existing coordination mechanisms.

FULTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Fulton County Government is a major player in terms of service delivery in Sandy Springs. As noted especially in Chapter 7 of this Technical Appendix, Fulton County Government provides many different facilities and services to the residents, businesses, and institutions of the City of Sandy Springs. Some of these are transitional in nature, such as fire protection (until the city's fire department's operations are initiated), while others are permanent and would be provided whether Sandy Springs was an incorporated municipality or not (sheriff, courts, health, social services, etc.). Some of the major ways Sandy Springs will need to coordinate with Fulton County Government are listed below:

- The provision of public water and sanitary sewer services.
- Partnering with the Fulton County Park and Recreation Department with regard to the provision of parkland and recreation facilities and services in Sandy Springs.
- Coordination with the Fulton County Department of Economic Development with regard to economic development activities.
- Fire protection service by the Fulton County Fire Department, until Sandy Springs gets its own fire department operationalized. Also, there is a need to maintain mutual aid agreements with Fulton County for the joint response to fire calls. Such agreements, after their establishment should be revisited periodically to determine whether they continue to reflect the most appropriate arrangements for intergovernmental cooperation.
- Fulton County Housing Authority in the provision of housing needs, unless Sandy Springs establishes its own housing program.
- Coordination of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and improvements in Sandy Springs, until Sandy Springs receives approval of a Consolidated Plan and begins the administration of its own CDBG entitlement funds.
- Use of the Fulton County Extension Agent as a resource, where needed.
- Participation in the Atlanta-Fulton County Emergency Management Agency in the preparation and implementation of emergency management contingency plans in response to catastrophic events such as flood, earthquake, and other natural disasters.

ALTERNATIVE FORM OF GOVERNANCE

For many years now, there has been a desire among some North Fulton County residents to recreate Old Milton County.¹ In the past two years, a movement to recreate Milton County has gained momentum. At the time of this writing, formal efforts to create Milton County out of Fulton County were underway. There is probably no other issue of such significance as a change in county government, should this effort succeed. The implications for Sandy Springs are profound.

FULTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The City of Sandy Springs has developed a relationship with the Fulton County Board of Education, which oversees Fulton County Public Schools. Areas of cooperation include dialogue regarding development of the school system's infrastructure improvements, involvement by the Board of Education in reviewing and commenting on land use applications in the City, and intergovernmental agreements regarding the joint, co-, or shared delivery of parks and recreation facilities.

OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

As noted in Chapter 7 of this Technical Appendix, Roswell abuts the City of Atlanta, the City of Roswell, Cobb County, and DeKalb County. There are numerous ways in which Sandy Springs will need to cooperate with such other local governments. One particular issue or opportunity is the treatment of sewage in Cobb and DeKalb Counties. As noted in the inventory of intergovernmental agreements provided at the end of this chapter, cities such as Smyrna, Doraville, and Roswell have intergovernmental agreements with Sandy Springs.

PERIMETER COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (PCID)

A CID is a geographic area whose property owners establish a Board of Directors who vote to levy additional property tax dollars to accelerate transportation and infrastructure improvement projects. CIDs are comprised of private properties usually zoned for non-residential uses. A CID is a private business organization, not a government entity. A CID is created when a simple majority of the commercial property owners agree to establish the district. This simple majority must also represent at least 75 percent of the taxable value of the commercial property located within the proposed CID.



The Perimeter CID has coordinated with local government in providing transportation improvements in the area; for instance, signs in the district show the CID logo.

¹ North Fulton County was once its own county, "Milton County." Historical accounts note that Milton County and Campbell County (which today is S. Fulton) merged with Fulton County during the great depression years (1930s) for financial reasons.

The Tax Commissioner must certify that these requirements are satisfied and the County must approve legislation authorizing the CID. The resolution establishing the CID includes a provision for a board of directors and the services to be provided. Specific joint planning or service agreements are entered into on a case by case basis. There is only one Community Improvement District in the City of Sandy Springs, the Perimeter CID.

Staff from the Department of Public Works, Transportation Division and the Department of Community Development, are the primary liaisons with the Perimeter CID. Staff members coordinate directly with the CID Administrator and meet quarterly to discuss planning issues that they may have.

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the 10-county area including Fulton County and its municipalities. Sandy Springs contributes to the ARC as a “regional development center” pursuant to mandate of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

The ARC Board is composed of officials of political subdivisions and private citizens representing districts of approximately the same population within the 10-county region. The ARC provides services and performs regional planning and coordination in the areas of: aging services, community services, environmental planning, government services, job training, land use and public facilities planning, transportation planning, and data gathering and analysis. ARC is designated as the Area Agency on Aging by the Georgia Department of Human Resources and administers federal funds for projects. The regional agency is also working with the Georgia Regional Advisory Council (Region 3) in various workforce development programs. Staff from several departments and divisions of the City of Sandy Springs work closely with ARC.

Coordination of the regional transportation and regional development plan is a major area of interface between Sandy Springs and ARC. ARC has provided funding to Fulton County for Sandy Springs as a part of its Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program. Also, if a regional fair share housing policy is ever developed by ARC, Sandy Springs would need to work cooperatively with the regional agency to determine and implement its share of regional housing needs.

Development approval within the Chattahoochee River corridor requires special reviews by ARC for consistency with its Chattahoochee Corridor Plan. The Community Development Department coordinates those reviews with ARC’s participation.

METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY (MARTA)

MARTA is a public authority established for the purposes of planning, constructing, financing and operating a public transportation system. MARTA is a key player in any future plans to improve heavy rail in Sandy Springs along Georgia 400; there are three MARTA rail stations and numerous MARTA bus stops in Sandy Springs. Coordinating with MARTA will help meet the transportation goals of reducing traffic congestion and promoting transportation choices to residents, visitors and the workforce.

In terms of transportation planning, MARTA and the City of Sandy Springs are formally linked by the Atlanta Regional Commission and its specific role as the “federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization” (MPO). The MPO role is to coordinate local governments, agencies such as MARTA and other parties in order “to plan a diverse system capable of moving people and goods efficiently and safely.”

GEORGIA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (GRTA)

Created in 1999 by the General Assembly under Title 50, Article 32, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority’s (GRTA) mission is to combat air pollution, traffic congestion and poorly planned development in the metropolitan Atlanta Region. Most of GRTA’s activities pertain to the Transportation, Land Use and Economic Development Elements of the plan.

GRTA’s authority includes, among other important functions, encouraging land use practices which promote efficient use of transportation investments, cooperatively developing transit plans for areas within its jurisdiction, coordinating transit services in the region, and reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRI). The purpose of GRTA’s review is to approve or disapprove the use of state and federal funds to create transportation services and access that may be required as a result of a DRI.

The City of Sandy Springs Department of Public Works (Transportation Planning) and Department of Community Development (Planning Division) coordinate with GRTA on many projects within the City. This includes attending meetings, providing information, and any other assistance and information requested by GRTA.

METROPOLITAN NORTH GEORGIA WATER PLANNING DISTRICT

This district was established by the Georgia General Assembly in 2001 via Senate Bill 130 to address the pressing need for comprehensive water resources management in metropolitan north Georgia. The main purpose of the district is to promote intergovernmental coordination for all water issues, to facilitate inter-jurisdictional water-related projects, and to enhance access to funding for water-related projects among local governments.

The district’s jurisdiction encompasses 16 counties including Fulton. It is required by State law to prepare three long-term plans (which it completed in 2003): a long-term wastewater management plan; a water supply and water conservation management plan, and a district-wide watershed management plan. These regional plans are very important and have a major bearing on the future of how water, sewer, and stormwater management facilities will be provided in Sandy Springs. An update of the plans must occur every five years, and Sandy Springs should participate in this plan update processes.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) plans, constructs, maintains and improves the State of Georgia’s highways and bridges. In addition, GDOT provides planning and financial support for other modes of transportation, including mass transit and airports. GDOT also has two agencies administratively attached to it, the State Road and Tollway Authority and the Georgia Rail Passenger Authority. City staff works closely with GDOT due to a number of roadways within the City under state jurisdiction.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is Georgia's department charged with protection of natural, historic, and cultural resources for present and future generations. DNR provides technical assistance in the areas of water conservation, environmental protection, wildlife preservation, parks and recreation and historic preservation.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) serves as an advocate for local governments and as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development. It also promulgates state building and other technical codes and administrative rules relative to comprehensive planning, solid waste management, and other topics. The City of Sandy Springs' departments with primary coordination with Georgia DCA are the Department of Community Development, Department of Public Works, and Administration.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

National Park Service

The existence of units of the Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area in Sandy Springs suggests that the City should coordinate with the National Park Service and ideally look for ways to co-deliver certain law enforcement activities in nationally designated areas.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

When development occurs in flood plains, flood plain maps must be updated and the Department of Community Development has to report variances to the flood plain regulations to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Department of Homeland Security

This agency works to protect citizens against terrorist and other security threats.

Appalachian Regional Commission

Sandy Springs, as part of Fulton County, is within the jurisdiction of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Fulton County is part of the local development district operated out of the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Appalachian Regional Commission is a multi-State federal agency that was created in 1965 for the purpose of creating opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improving the quality of life of north Georgia residents. The commission is a potential source of State and federal resources to assist the City with various programs.

In its Strategic Plan, *Setting a Regional Agenda*, the Appalachian Regional Commission establishes a mission statement and five major goals. The mission statement is to advocate for and partner with the people of Appalachia to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life. Its goals include ensuring skills and knowledge of residents to they compete in the world economy of the 21st century, providing proper infrastructure for sustained economic development, mobilizing capacity for sustained progress, having access to financial and technical resources, and access to quality, affordable health care.

SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGIES

In 1997, the State passed the Service Delivery Strategy Act (HB 489). This law mandates the cooperation of local governments with regard to service delivery issues. Each County was required to initiate development of a service delivery strategy between July 1, 1997, and January 1, 1998. Service delivery strategies must include an identification of services provided by various entities, assignment of responsibility for provision of services and the location of service areas, a description of funding sources, and an identification of contracts, ordinances, and other measures necessary to implement the service delivery strategy. Sandy Springs, as a new municipality, must be included in the Fulton County Service Delivery Strategy.

Changes to service arrangements described in a service delivery strategy require an update of the service delivery strategy and an agreement by all parties. Because of this provision, it is likely that the need for intergovernmental coordination with regard to service delivery strategies will continue into the future. In addition, service delivery strategies must be updated every ten years. The Service Delivery Strategy Act also mandates that land use plans of different local governments be revised to avoid conflicts.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS

This section provides an inventory of intergovernmental agreements that have been executed by the City of Sandy Springs. It excludes reference to agreements with non-profit organizations.

City of Roswell – Housing of Prison Inmates

Since Sandy Springs does not have its own detention facility, it entered into an agreement with the City of Roswell to house prison inmates in Roswell's detention facility. This agreement was signed December 5, 2005, with an expiration date of June 30, 2006, or until terminated, but it can also be extended for up to 50 years. Sandy Springs pays \$65.00 per prisoner day for every Sandy Springs prisoner held in the Roswell Detention Center.

City of Doraville – Housing of Prison Inmates

On October 11, 2006, Sandy Springs signed an agreement with the City of Doraville for Doraville to provide detention services to the City of Sandy Springs. This agreement has not yet been signed by the City of Doraville.

Irwin County Sheriff – Inmate Housing Agreement

On August 24, 2006, Sandy Springs entered into an inmate housing agreement with Irwin County, Georgia's Sheriff for the provision of jail (inmate detention) services at the Irwin County Detention Center located at 132 Cotton Drive, Ocilla, Georgia 31774. The cost to Sandy Springs is \$45.00 per day per inmate. The agreement is effective for one year.

City of Atlanta – Water Service

The City of Atlanta provides water service to some residents of Sandy Springs. A memorandum of understanding (not dated) was entered into between Sandy Springs and Atlanta as an interim measure for Atlanta to continue its current water service functions until Sandy Springs could become a signatory to the Fulton County Service Delivery Strategy. The memorandum of

understanding is effective until the Service Delivery Strategy is amended to account for these services.

City of Atlanta – Use of Atlanta Fire Station 39

This agreement authorizes Sandy Springs to use Atlanta's Fire Station 39, located at 4697 Wieuca Road, NE, to house fire apparatus and personnel of the Sandy Springs Fire Department. Sandy Springs is a tenant, and Atlanta retains title to the station. The station is referred to in the agreement as "Atlanta-Sandy Springs Fire Station #4." Sandy Springs is obligated by the agreement to provide at least one approved Class A fire pumper with a pumping capacity of not less than 1,500 gallons per minute and staffed with no less than four State of Georgia Standard and Training Council certified firefighters and minimally trained to EMT-1 level to respond to an automatic response area as determined by the Atlanta Fire and Rescue Department. This agreement also references a Mutual Aid Agreement between Sandy Springs and Atlanta. As of October 23, 2006, this agreement was not signed and was awaiting signature.

City of Smyrna – Library Services

This agreement, entered into December 17, 2005, provides that the City of Smyrna will provide library services consisting of book depository collections established in up to 15 locations in Sandy Springs. The duration of the agreement is December 31, 2006. Sandy Springs agrees to pay the actual costs of such services including delivery vehicle, personnel, and cost of materials, plus \$1,000 per month.

Since Sandy Springs is part of the Atlanta-Fulton County library system, this agreement appears to provide supplemental library services in Sandy Springs, i.e., in addition to those services, rather than as a substitute for Atlanta-Fulton County library facilities. Since this agreement expires as of December 31, 2006, (with no apparent provision for renewal) it will need to be reconsidered in light of facility and service objectives established by the Sandy Springs Mayor and City Council.

Fulton County – Animal Control

Fulton County provides animal control services to Sandy Springs per intergovernmental agreement signed February 24, 2006. The period of this agreement is only through June 30, 2006. Fulton County provides animal control services via a private vendor. Annual payment is made by the city to Fulton County based on total animal control activities reported. Since this agreement appears to have expired with no automatic renewal date (unless another such agreement has been signed), it appears that this agreement needs to be renewed.

Fulton County – Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

This agreement was signed December 21, 2005, and services went into effect January 1, 2006, for a period of six months (i.e., concluding on June 30, 2006). This agreement was subsequently amended on May 17, 2006 to provide for another six months of service commencing July 1, 2006, and concluding on December 31, 2006. Following conclusion of this agreement, Sandy Springs will be solely responsible for providing all fire department and EMS services within the city limits, unless the agreement is extended (approved by both parties). The level of service standard for firefighting and EMS is a goal of six minutes or less, 90 percent of the time. Note that this level of service standard is not as satisfactory as desired, according

to the Community Facilities and Services Element, which specifies a standard of four minutes or less, 90 percent of the time.

This agreement was amended (extended) again on September 20, 2006 (approved by Sandy Springs Mayor and City Council on October 17, 2006), relative to 911 Emergency Communications Services, for a period of two years, commencing January 1, 2007 and extending through December 31, 2008. At the conclusion of that agreement, Sandy Springs will be solely responsible for providing its own public safety answering point services, the agreement provides.

Fulton County – Wastewater Services

As an interim measure, until Sandy Springs can become a signatory to the Fulton County Service Delivery Strategy, the city entered into an agreement with Fulton County on December 21, 2005, to provide wastewater services to the city. Since some of the wastewater produced in Sandy Springs is reportedly treated in adjacent counties, consideration should be given as to whether future agreements should reference Fulton County's agreements with adjacent Cobb and DeKalb Counties regarding wastewater services as they relate to Sandy Springs. This agreement does not appear to have a termination clause or renewal provision, though, again, it anticipates that the Fulton County Service Delivery Strategy (upon agreement) will supersede this agreement.

Fulton County Tax Commissioner – Tax Billing and Collection

This agreement went into effect February 1, 2006, and is good for a ten-year period. It provides for the Fulton County Tax Commissioner to collect municipal ad valorem taxes levied by the City of Sandy Springs. Fulton County is compensated by payment by the city of the approximate actual costs of providing services.

Fulton County – Lease and Use of Park Properties

This agreement has an effective date of January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006, unless terminated. It provides for the City of Sandy Springs to assume Fulton County's responsibility for maintaining and repairing various park properties (Hammond Park, North Fulton Tennis Center and park land), East Conway Pocket Park, Sandy Springs Historic Site, Allen Road Park, Morgan Falls Ball Fields, Ridgeview Park, Big Trees, Island Ferry Park, Johnson Ferry Road Greenspace, Abernathy Park and Morgan Falls (Bull Sluice). Under this agreement, ownership of these park lands remains with Fulton County, but subsequent agreement was reached to transfer ownership of park lands to the City of Sandy Springs.

Fulton County – 800 MHz Radio System Access

This agreement was entered into May 17, 2006, and provides for the city to use Fulton County's radio system. The term of agreement is ten years.

Fulton County Housing Authority

Under this agreement, authorized by Sandy Springs on August 15, 2006, the Fulton County Housing Authority is officially recognized as owner of two properties located in Sandy Springs: the Allen Road mid-rise, a 100-unit facility located at 144 Allen Road, Sandy Springs, Georgia, 30328, and the Belle Isle Apartments, a 9-unit assisted property, located at 151 W. Belle Isle

Road, Sandy Springs, Georgia, 30328. Under this agreement, Sandy Springs assumes “responsible entity” status with regard to annual environmental review responsibilities of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The *Regional Development Plan Guidebook*, published by ARC, provides suggested “best practices,” some of which pertain to intergovernmental coordination. Table 8.1 identifies those intergovernmental coordination best practices that apply during local Comprehensive Planning and shows the extent to which those best practices can be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Table 8.1
Best Intergovernmental Coordination Practices
and their Potential Application in Sandy Springs

Tool	Best Intergovernmental Coordination Practice	Applicability in Sandy Springs
Transit Oriented Development	The Intergovernmental Coordination Element identifies opportunities for the local government and transit provider (e.g., MARTA) for transit-oriented development.	Consider in the future land use planning efforts
Mixed-Income Housing	The Intergovernmental Coordination Element identifies potential partners in mixed-income housing community building, along with their potential roles.	Mixed-income housing can be further addressed in the Housing Element. Potential partners can be identified.
Retrofitting and Redeveloping Corridors	The Intergovernmental Coordination Element identifies opportunities for the local government, developers, and other agencies to support corridor retrofitting or redevelopment.	This may be applicable in specific plans, programs and strategies for improving the Roswell Road Corridor.
Retrofitting and Redeveloping Corridors	A redevelopment agency or other entity is assigned overall coordination responsibilities for redevelopment.	This needs to be addressed in the implementation component of Sandy Springs' comprehensive plan.
Greyfield Redevelopment	The Intergovernmental Coordination Element identifies opportunities for the local government, developers, and other agencies to support greyfield redevelopment.	This needs to be addressed in the implementation component of Sandy Springs' comprehensive plan.
School Siting and Land Use	A School Board – Local Government interlocal agreement for facility planning exists.	This should be further addressed in the Community Agenda.
School Siting and Land Use	A School Board – Local Government interlocal agreement for joint facility use exists.	This issue is being addressed with respect to recreation and parks facilities in the recreation and parks master plan.
School Siting and Land Use	A School Board – Local Government cooperative agreement exists with regard to development and improvements needed to support school development, including cost sharing of road improvements, traffic signals, and sidewalks.	This should be further addressed in the Community Agenda.
School Siting and Land Use	The school board participates in the Comprehensive Planning process.	Participation by the school board's personnel should be achieved where possible.
School Siting and Land Use	The local government has an ex-officio representative on the school board's capital facilities planning committee.	The City is not represented on such a committee.
School Siting and Land Use	One or more joint work sessions between City governing body and the school board are held.	This is desirable but not implemented at this time.